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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

From: Albert E. Fontenot, Jr. (signed January 21, 2021)
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Subject: Documentation of Updates to the Internet Self-Response Operation

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This memorandum documents updates that have been made to the Internet Self-Response (ISR) operation since the release of the ISR Detailed Operational Plan (DOP) on August 22, 2018. Operational changes fall into two categories: the addition of Mobile Questionnaire Assistance (MQA) to the ISR operation, and changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These updates, summarized below, are provided to ensure accurate final documentation available to the public.

Mobile Questionnaire Assistance: The Census Bureau proposed a Mobile Response Initiative in response to the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 (P.L. 116-6). The Mobile Response Initiative proposed to incorporate the use of technology to provide readily accessible ways for people to respond to the census. The highly mobile locations gave way to naming the program "Mobile Questionnaire Assistance," or MQA. The original purpose and scope of MQA are as follows:

> The Census Bureau will work with partners across the United States to identify key locations with prominent visibility in areas with low self-response rates. Possible locations include grocery stores and markets, houses of worship before and after services, community festivals, public transit hubs, libraries, community centers, and other locations where people naturally congregate. Initially, the MQA locations will be determined based on 2020 projected self-response rates. As households submit responses, real-time response rates will drive the MQA locations. Because this effort is not tied to specific physical locations, MQA staff can dynamically deploy to locations where they are most needed. MQA staff will help respondents answer questions and directly access the census questionnaire on Census Bureau-issued mobile devices

in English, or in one of 12 non-English languages, or call for assistance. In addition, MQA staff will also have language assistance guides for 59 non-English languages.

The scope of the program was refined because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the limitation on public events. The updated scope statement is:

1. Staff MQA sites in places where people visit when leaving home (as opposed to large public events), promoting and assisting with self-response.

2. Engage in activities that drive people to respond in the lowest responding neighborhoods.

MQA is not a stand-alone operation. For documentation purposes, MQA was included under the ISR operation. This initiative was added to the 2020 Census design after the publication of the Detailed Operational Plan for ISR and the v4.0 2020 Census Operational Plan. Thus, this is the only published document for the ISR operation that provides the full integration.

MQA provided specific opportunities for people to respond to the 2020 Census online and receive assistance with their response. As discussed below, within the Business Process Models, ISR 12-3.1.1 already showed the process for responses coming from partnership activities to enter the ISR application. This documentation is now updated to call out specifically the MQA partnership activity, as well as clarify that kiosks were not used for any outreach ISR activities. Additional details about MQA can be found in the MQA Project Plan.

Page 2, Section 2.1 – Operation Purpose: The first ISR DOP update is to the ISR operation purpose statement to include MQA. The updated statement follows.

The goal of the Internet Self-Response (ISR) operation is to communicate the importance of responding to the 2020 Census to the U.S. population and generate the largest possible self-response in order to reduce the need to conduct expensive in-person follow-up. At its highest level, ISR works toward this goal in three ways.

First, ISR develops communication and contact strategies to encourage the use of the internet as the primary response mode through a sequence of invitations and reminder mailings. These mailings are referred to as the stratified self-response mail strategy and historical response rates, internet access, and demographics are used to tailor the strategy in order to make responding as easy as possible.

A second key aspect of ISR is to increase high-quality responses by increasing the opportunity to and flexibility with which a person can respond. The primary way this is done is by providing an internet application that respondents can use at any time from nearly any location to respond online. This application can be used across most devices and browsers and can be displayed in multiple languages. Users may also respond through the application without a unique identification code, which is referred to as a Census ID or a User ID. These features enable ISR to be used seamlessly with the Mobile Questionnaire Assistance enumeration collection efforts.

Lastly, the ISR operation works to increase response to the census by working with other operations to provide the opportunity to respond using other collection modes. Namely, the ISR operation provides the application used by the Census Questionnaire Assistance operation

(CQA) to collect responses for those who call and respond over the telephone, as well as working with the Forms Printing and Distribution operation (FPD) to include paper questionnaires as part of the stratified self-response mail strategy.

- **Page 26, Section 3.1.1 – Develop Contact Strategy:** The 2020 Census mail strategy was updated to include two additional mailings. These additional mailings are because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting extension of census field operations. A sixth mailing was added to the contact strategy for those housing units that had not yet responded by mid-July. In mid-August, a seventh mailing, which included a letter and questionnaire, was sent to nonresponding housing units in the lowest responding areas in the Internet First panel universe. Table 7 on page 26 would reflect these changes as follows:

Table 1: Mailing Panels and Materials

Panel	Number of Cohorts	Mailing 1	Mailing 2	Mailing 3*	Mailing 4*	Mailing 5*	Mailing 6*	Mailing 7**
Internet First	4	Letter	Letter	Postcard	Letter + Questionnaire	"It's not too late" Postcard	Postcard	Letter + Questionnaire
Internet Choice	N/A	Letter + Questionnaire	Letter	Postcard	Letter + Questionnaire	"It's not too late" Postcard	Postcard	N/A

* Targeted only to nonresponding households
** Targeted only to nonresponding households in lowest response areas

- **Page 36, Figure 11 – Collect and Validate Internet Responses [ISR 12-3.1.1]:** The note under 60.10 should be as follows: "Can also use tablet and special URL for Mobile Questionnaire Assistance (MQA)." This update both indicates the addition of the specific MQA activities as well as noting that kiosks were not used.

- **Page 38, Figure 12 – 3.3.1.2 Translate Non-English Content [ISR 12-3.1.2]:** The section heading should be updated to include "Non-Spanish" content, as in Figure 12. There is also some additional detail about how Non-English and Non-Spanish cases were routed for translation. Translation work was sent to both the Tucson Call Center (TCC) and the Decennial Translation Branch (DTB) at Census Bureau headquarters (HQ) to translate the content of responses flagged for translation. HQ support was added during the 2020 Census to clear the backlog of cases needing Non-English and Non-Spanish translation because of the temporary closure of the TCC that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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